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DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

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SUBJECT: 35 NIGERIANS YOU SHOULD KNOW: OUR TOP FIVE IN
SEVEN CATEGORIES

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

11. (C) Introduction: Understanding who matters, not what matters, is often the half the battle in Nigeria. Perhaps more than any other country on the subcontinent, Nigeria has hundreds upon hundreds of politicians, businessmen, retired military generals, and traditional leaders who wield tremendous influence and can shape the outcome of whatever current crisis is threatening to unsettle the country. Nigeria is now is at a crossroads, and a rocky one at that. Leadership is lacking; elites, especially the northerners, are anxious about President Yar'Adua's health: and people are worried about the "what next?" scenario -- if Yar'Adua's election is overturned or he becomes incapacitated or dies in office. For a country with a tradition of strongmen with strong personalities as its leaders, there is some disquiet over the state of affairs at the moment. However, we find that Nigerian governors and other state officials are concerned primarily with issues directly affecting their states. We see an indifference about what goes on in Abuja from a number of state leaders and governors, who have taken state autonomy to new levels. These governors, plus other members of the elite such as businessmen, military and traditional leaders, and politicians all are pieces of the puzzle. These individuals, whether they are competing against each other or uniting in pursuit of some common political or economic goal, will determine how Nigeria will weather this stormy period. As the Supreme Court nears a decision on the 2007 presidential election and predictions about the President's health become more dire, the Mission has put together a list of leaders who would play a major role in keeping Nigeria either on track, off track, or trying to put it back on track, since it has certainly lost its way over the past 12 months. Therefore, below is the Mission's back-of-the-envelope list of some three dozen Nigerians, separated into seven overarching categories, who are going to be critical in the next couple of months. (Note: the names in each of the sections are NOT/NOT listed in order of importance.) End Introduction.

Yar'Adua's Inner Circle

12. (C) Turai Yar'Adua: President Yar'Adua's wife; widely believed to have a strong say over many of the decisions made

in the Villa; allegations persist that she is lining her pockets; she has a reputation for having a vicious personality; causes great fear among ministers; known as Mrs. President; has recently begged Yar'Adua to stay the course as President when we heard he wanted to step aside about two weeks ago.

¶3. (C) Taminu Yakubu: President's Chief Economic Advisor; one of his closest associates from Katsina State; a bit unsavory; reportedly involved in illicit enrichment schemes, but someone whom we need to watch, to whom we need to maintain our access and contacts.

¶4. (C) Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) Yayale Ahmed: A former classmate of the President; in charge of most of the day-to-day operations of the government; affable but should not be underestimated; reasonably positively disposed towards the U.S.; recommend we take him up on his desire to visit Washington DC. If Yar'Adua weathers the medical issues longer than anticipated, then Yayale Ahmed most likely will be the one running the show behind the scenes unless he is forced out in some political play, which could happen.

¶5. (C) Attorney General Michael Aondoakaa: Tends to be present when the President makes important decisions; one of leading advocates for removing EFCC Chairman Ribadu; not to be trusted; close to ex-Delta State Governor James Ibori; was recently in London helping out Ibori's lawyer, who was recently arrested by the Metropolitan police. Aondoakaa claims that whatever information Met Police has previously

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from the EFCC was not obtained through proper channels. If you think of Darth Vader, you think of the AG.

¶6. (C) Dahiru Mangal: Wealthy businessman; said to have benefited from government contracts when Yar'Adua was Katsina State Governor; keeps a low profile; also rumored to have close connections to fundamentalists in the north.

Northern Governors

¶7. (C) Kwara State Governor Bukola Saraki: One of the President's key advisors; critical in anointing PDP leadership; Chair of Northern Governor's Forum; family's influence well-established in Kwara and western Kogi State; his ailing father heads the Northern Union; Saraki family is also involved in some questionably illicit deals, and reportedly also had a hand in choosing current EFCC Chairwoman Waziri as a way to protect his father from EFCC inquiry.

¶8. (C) Katsina State Governor Ibrahim Shema: One of the President's key confidantes from Katsina; not a big personality on his own; his claim to fame is his relationship with the President, and maintaining the good work that Yar'Adua did in Katsina. Ambassador has visited the state and it is one of the most well run, and clean states in the Federation.

¶9. (C) Benue State Governor Gabriel Suswam: Appears to be close to President; helped select PDP leadership, particularly PDP Chairman Vincent Ogbulafor; former member of the House of Representatives.

¶10. (C) Adamawa State Governor Murtala Nyako: A former Naval Chief of Staff; former military governor who was unafraid of unpopular decisions; close to President Yar'Adua as they were governors at the same time, might be someone we can work with; considered to be one of the more effective Governors in the north on implementing state programs to help his constituents. Ambassador just had a long and frank meeting

with him on Yar'Adua's health, but he was clear that he would push for Nigeria to follow constitutional succession processes in the event that the President does not survive.

¶11. (C) Kano State Governor Ibrahim Shekerau: ANPP Governor; leads most populous state in the north; helped stop PDP from stealing state election in 2003 and 2007; of late, Shekerau has been a disappointment as he has done little for his state; his popularity also has tanked since he fell out with former presidential candidate Buhari.

Southern Governors

¶12. (C) Bayelsa State Governor Timipre Sylva: Only Ijaw Governor in Nigeria; leads one of the wealthiest states; of late has been one of the GON's go-to-guys on Niger Delta issues as he has been able to pull some of the militants into vocational training and demobilization efforts, and has been willing to help the GON military's JTF stamp out the rest; he told the Ambassador that he receives \$700 million a year in oil receipts, and that he has helped militant leader Joshua Mcgyver come in from the cold.

¶13. (C) Rivers State Governor Rotimi Amaechi: His state receives about \$1 billion annually from oil receipts; Port Harcourt serves as oil industry's capital; political contacts from his stint as Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly; pushing for a harder military line in the Delta by the JTF, and as a result has more access now to the Villa given his support for the JTF.

¶14. (C) Lagos State Governor Babatunde Fashola: He leads the most populous state in the country (despite what the 2006

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census claimed); very popular in Lagos and noted for his energy and initiative; only Action Congress governor, and has access to Yar'Adua when he wants it, given the importance of Lagos State.

¶15. (C) Ogun State Governor Gbenga Daniel: One of the few second-term Governors in the southwest; has decent reputation for governance; does not have the mandate problems of Oyinlola of Osun state or Agagu of Ondo state; his relationship to Obasanjo has turned sour as of late, but he can still be an important bellwether of the former President's positions.

¶16. (C) Anambra State Governor Peter Obi: One of the few governors in southeast with some popular appeal; managed to stay in power despite best efforts of the Uba brothers who first thwarted his legitimate election win in 2003 and then pushed the State Assembly to impeach him in 2006; has support of the Church; links to business community from days as a banker; very close to the most senior traditional elder in the south, the Obi of Onitsha, and made sure the Ambassador met him on a recent trip to Anambra. During Ambassador's visit there, it is clear that Obi has done a lot in his state, particularly on infrastructure development.

Businessmen

¶17. (C) Aliko Dangote: One of the richest men in Nigeria; helped finance PDP's campaigns in 1999, 2003, and 2007; still widely influential despite losing some contracts under the current administration; he also sits on an unofficial kitchen cabinet for economic matters that Yar'Adua listens to; Ambassador has access to him.

¶18. (C) Jim Ovia: CEO of Zenith Bank, which is one of the most successful banks in the country now. Mission enjoys a good PPP relationship with him on a number of public

diplomacy and AID projects. Ambassador knows him well.

¶19. (C) Ibru Family: One of the wealthiest families in Nigeria; Michael is an "industrialist" with his finger in a lot of different businesses and industries; Alex publishes the Guardian newspaper; Felix was Governor of Delta State and then a two-term senator; Cecilia is the MD of Oceanic Bank.

¶20. (C) Femi Otedola: Owner of Zenon Oil; Close to Obasanjo; His father was Governor of Lagos State from 1991-1993; recent press reports suggest he is expanding his business portfolio into sugar and cement sectors.

¶21. (C) Ndi-Okereke Onyiuke: Director-General of the Nigerian Stock Exchange; President of Transcorp; considered to be close to former President Obasanjo; she is considered very close to Nigeria's top bankers, but also has a questionable relationship with stockbrokers and reportedly manipulates shares for the benefits of her close associates.

Southern Godfathers, Elders, and Traditional Leaders

¶22. (C) Edwin Clark: Former Commissioner of Information; from Delta State; appears to have access to VP Goodluck Jonathan as well as some sway over many of the militants; seen by the GON as someone they can talk to, but unclear whether he can really influence militants behavior in his area.

¶23. (C) Former President Obasanjo: Although his star has dimmed over the past 18 months, OBJ helped put in place many of the politicians in office now; exceptionally wealthy; member of Transcorp; Head of PDP's Board of Trustees (for now).

¶24. (C) Ooni of Ife: One of the two most powerful traditional leaders in the southwest.

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¶25. (C) Obi of Onitsha: Key traditional leader in southeast; is a Stanford graduate and a former Shell Managing-Director

¶26. (C) Former VP Alex Ekwueme: Prominent leader in southeast; part of the G-34; helping to reform PDP.

Northern Godfathers, Elders, and Traditional Leaders

¶27. (C) Former Head of State Ibrahim Babangida: Always a factor in Nigerian politics; often works in tandem with his neighbor, former head of State General Abdulsalami Abubakar.

¶28. (C) Former President Shehu Shagari/Former Head of State Yakubu Gowon: Both command respect from the street and elite.

¶29. (C) Former Head of State Muhammadu Buhari: The new and improved Buhari showed principled positions on anti-corruption and electoral issues which earned him reasonable grassroots support in north during the last election.

¶30. (C) Emir of Kano: In office since the 1960s, the Emir is probably second only to the Sultan in terms of influence; he is one of the more senior traditional leaders alive today (the Lamindo of Yola is the oldest sitting traditional leader); has helped in the past to broker elite compromises.

¶31. (C) Emir of Zazzau: From prominent city of Zaria, one of the more important traditional leaders in the north; same can be said of the Emir of Katsina.

¶32. (C) Speaker of the House of Representatives Dimeji Bankole: Occupies the number four position in the country; his father is a longtime rival of former President Obasanjo in Ogun State.

¶33. (C) Representative Farouk Lawan: Leader of the Integrity Group, which spearheaded the removal of corrupt Speaker of the House Patricia Etteh.

¶34. (C) Ledum Mittee: Leads the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP); respected in Delta for his position as Saro-Wiwa's number two; heads Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC), and is thought to be doing his best to ensure stakeholder participation in the NDTC.

¶35. (C) Peter Esele: Leader of Trade Union Congress and former head of PENGASSEN, which represents Nigerians with more white-collar occupations in the oil sector.

¶36. (C) Olisa Agbakoba: Former President of the Nigeria Bar Association.

In Two Categories by Themselves -- Senate President David Mark & The ADC

¶37. (C) Defying classification, Senate President David Mark is the number three officeholder in the government and would assume immediate power if the Supreme Court overturned the Presidential election; he is a former military general who served as Minister of Communication in past military regimes; once known as a Babangida boy, Mark was content to support former President Obasanjo's third term bid and now is trying to cozy up to Yar'Adua; according to rumors, he spend millions of dollars to keep his Senate seat; there are reports that Chief Justice Kutigi is looking into whether Mark bought off judges over the summer in order to assure a favorable ruling in the August 2008 ruling on the appeal of his Electoral Tribunal case (the Tribunal largely ruled

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against Mark). Mark is cocky and brash, and would certainly use any interim opportunity -- if the Supreme Court annuls the 2007 election -- to advance his political goals.

¶38. (C) The Aide de Camp -- Colonel Mustapha Onoyiveta: Ambassador has met with him on many occasions; we believe he is not to be trusted. We also have heard (including from Governor Saraki) that he is not loyal to Yar'Adua. We believe he is a wild card being the man standing behind Yar'Adua, primarily responsible for his personal security. We all know the role that young colonels have had in Nigeria as well as other countries around Africa. He is someone we are watching closely.
Sanders